United Nations S/PV.5988

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5988th meeting

Tuesday, 7 October 2008, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Zhang Yesui	(China)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	Costa Rica	Mr. Ballestero
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Quarrey
	United States of America	Ms. DiCarlo
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (S/2008/628)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-53847 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country (S/2008/628)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Guinea-Bissau, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Pascoe to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Her Excellency Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Brazil.

It is so decided.

I invite Mrs. Viotti to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/628, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Her Excellency Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Brazil.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Mr. Pascoe: We should thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to introduce the Secretary-General's latest report on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in that country. The Council has before it the Secretary-General's report in document S/2008/628, dated 29 September 2008.

Today's meeting is taking place at a time of continuing political and security tensions in the country, even as preparations move ahead for crucial legislative elections scheduled for next month. Our discussions also come against the backdrop of growing national and international concern about the impact of the illicit drug trade on this small and vulnerable country on the coast of West Africa. Although Guinea-Bissau has come a long way since the civil war of the late 1990s, all of the gains achieved at this point in establishing democratic governance and stability in the country will be at risk if that menace is not confronted head on.

However, I must stress that Guinea-Bissau is not the only West African country affected by the growing drug-trafficking crisis in the subregion. In fact, to its credit, Guinea-Bissau has been very open in acknowledging the dangers it faces and the already heavy impact of this phenomenon on the country's political, economic and social structures. Therefore, even as we focus on Guinea-Bissau on this occasion, it is clear that a sustainable, longer-term solution can best be achieved through robust regional approaches.

Let me turn briefly to major recent political developments in Guinea-Bissau. As members of the Council are aware, Prime Minister Carlos Correia was appointed on 5 August to head a caretaker Government. The previous Government had fallen after the decision of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) in late July to withdraw from the political and government stability pact. Since taking office, Prime Minister Correia has on several occasions affirmed his commitment to hold the legislative elections on 16 November 2008, as scheduled. Only last week, during the general debate, President Vieira also reiterated his commitment to holding the elections on schedule.

Preparations for the polls are on track. Twenty-three parties and two coalitions submitted applications to the Supreme Court by the 18 September deadline, which means that 27 of the 34 registered parties will be participating in the elections. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is coordinating international resource mobilization efforts, and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) is responsible for the coordination of international electoral observation. To date, international electoral observers are expected from the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU).

The electoral financing gap is also narrowing, although there is a still a shortfall of over $4 million, including arrears of about $1 million from previous elections, which donors expect the Government to handle as part of its sovereign obligations with respect to elections.

The Secretary-General welcomes recent additional pledges of support by the European Union of about $2.2 million, as well as new pledges by Spain of about $740,000. He appeals once again to the international community to provide the necessary resources to help Guinea-Bissau fill the financial gap and allow preparations for the elections to proceed smoothly and on schedule.

As elections approach, there is an uneasy calm in the country. In early August, the authorities announced that they had discovered an attempted coup by elements of the armed forces, allegedly led by the Chief of Staff of the Navy. He was subsequently put under house arrest but escaped to the Gambia, where he was detained and has since requested political asylum. The Guinea-Bissau authorities have requested that he be tried by a regional tribunal.

Meanwhile, the Chief of Staff of the Guinea-Bissau armed forces is said to be conducting a full investigation into the circumstances related to the attempted coup. Security forces are also increasing security checks and other operations around the country in order to ensure a stable climate conducive to the conduct of peaceful elections.

Guinea-Bissau's difficulty in paying public sector salaries in a timely manner continues to exacerbate social, political and security tensions. Those payments are now reportedly two months in arrears, raising concerns that, if not addressed, the matter could create social instability prior to and during the elections. The situation has been worsened by the sharp rise in food and fuel prices, especially in a country where salaries are extremely low and are not paid regularly.

The World Bank has just approved a $5 million grant to help the country cope with rising food and fuel prices in the short- and medium-terms. The Government has also taken measures within its limited capacity to alleviate the suffering of the population by reducing taxes on rice imports.

Members of the Council will recall that the Secretary-General has consistently identified security sector reform as one of Guinea-Bissau's critical priority challenges. We are pleased to note that Guinea-Bissau authorities themselves not only recognize the urgent need for action in that domain, but have indeed begun to take concrete measures to that end. In response, international partners have increased their support.

The European Union has already deployed 15 security sector reform advisers to Bissau to assist national authorities as they begin to implement the country's agreed security sector reform programme. A United Nations led inter-agency security sector reform assessment mission will visit Guinea-Bissau from 14 to 24 October at the request of the Government. The mission, to be facilitated by UNOGBIS, in collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and with the participation of INTERPOL, the European Union and ECOWAS, is designed specifically to take stock of security sector reform requirements in the areas of defense, justice, the rule of law and law enforcement capacity. The mission will

make recommendations on ways and means of supporting Guinea-Bissau's security sector reform programme in an integrated manner.

I would like to recognize the steady progress being made in the ongoing peacebuilding process in Guinea-Bissau. The engagement between the country and the international community in that exercise remains firm and productive. On 18 September, the National Steering Committee endorsed the strategic framework for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. In turn, the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on Guinea-Bissau formally adopted the strategy on 1 October. That development has now laid a solid foundation for concrete implementation to proceed. The Secretary-General, following the adoption of the strategy, will be examining the possible disbursement of the second financial grant to Guinea-Bissau from the Peacebuilding Fund.

Let me return to the issue of drug trafficking, which I mentioned at the outset of my statement. As various sources, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), have reported, Guinea-Bissau is fast becoming a strategic link in the transport of illegal narcotics from South America to Europe. The potentially damaging impact of the illegal trade, including its corrupting influence on the country's fragile institutions, should not be underestimated. The authorities themselves recognize the lack of national capacity to tackle the problem effectively on their own. Current international efforts to help strengthen national capacity, especially support for the judicial sector, are welcome and important but not sufficient. The authorities of Guinea-Bissau, including President Vieira, have said that more needs to be done to help them, in particular since they consider the drug trafficking crisis to be tarnishing the country's image and undermining its moral and social order.

The recommendation of the Secretary-General in the report now before the Council

> "consider establishing a panel of experts to investigate the identity and activities of those involved in drug trafficking and organized crime in Guinea-Bissau" (*S/2008/628, para. 45*)

is intended to send a strong message of continued international support in the face of the growing concern. With the Council's endorsement, the proposed course of action would add to the momentum for action in advance of the ECOWAS high-level conference called to address the drug trafficking threat in West Africa. The President of the ECOWAS Commission has confirmed that the conference will take place in Cape Verde on 28 and 29 October. The Secretary-General has instructed UNODC, UNOGBIS and the United Nations Office for West Africa to assist ECOWAS in its preparations for the conference.

Without prejudging the actions that the Council might decide to take in response to the findings that the proposed panel of experts might put forward, the reference in the report of the Secretary-General to punitive targeted sanctions is intended to be directed not at Guinea-Bissau or any other country, but rather at individuals who would be seen as involved in the cycle of drug trafficking from the source to the transit point to the final destination.

The drug trafficking threat is a major challenge to Guinea-Bissau and to its neighbours, many of which are recovering from long periods of civil conflicts. As the United Nations continues to contribute to the consolidation of the fragile peace processes in those countries in order to prevent a relapse into new cycles of instability, we believe that tackling the emerging new danger of drug trafficking vigorously and resolutely is essential to the success of ongoing peacebuilding initiatives.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

I give the floor to Mrs. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Brazil.

Mrs. Viotti: I would like to thank you, Sir, for your invitation to address the Security Council in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of October.

I am pleased to inform the Council that an integrated strategic framework for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau was formally adopted by the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission on 1 October. The framework is the result of an extensive consultative process and a series of thematic discussions held both in Bissau and in New York. It binds together the Government, all relevant

stakeholders in the country and the international community in a set of commitments aimed at contributing to peacebuilding efforts.

The active and meaningful engagement of civil society in Guinea-Bissau in that process indicates that the framework is more than a governmental document. It is owned by Guinea-Bissau as a whole. It points to the root causes of conflict and the fundamental issues that will remain a priority and will need to be addressed in the coming years.

The adoption of the strategy followed my last visit to Bissau as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission country-specific configuration on 10 September. During that visit, I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the new Government established on 5 August, as well as with local civil society, party leaders, international agencies on the ground and the diplomatic community. The main findings of the mission were outlined in a document entitled "Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau: Conclusions and recommendations of the Peacebuilding Committee on the situation in Guinea-Bissau" (PBC/3/GNB/1), which was forwarded to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and circulated during the most recent meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau, held on 23 September.

The political situation in Guinea-Bissau remains calm. The change in Government was carried out in a peaceful atmosphere and within the framework of the Constitution. Many key ministers were kept in office, which was a sign of the country's willingness to move ahead with the necessary reforms. The fact that an attempted coup d'état in August did not succeed was seen as proof that resorting to force is no longer supported as a means to settle disputes and that the military remains willing to adhere to civilian rule.

The immediate priority included in the Framework refers to the successful holding of legislative elections on 16 November. Following the completion of voter registration and the publication of the list of candidates, preparations for the elections are well under way. It is expected that, following new pledges by donors, the funding gap will be filled if the additional resources are used with flexibility to help the Government cover its sovereignty costs. All parties in Guinea-Bissau are aware of the significance of the elections for the preservation of stability and democracy. The Peacebuilding Commission stands ready to support and monitor the electoral process.

Reactivation of the economy and rehabilitation of the infrastructure are also considered key priorities in the Framework. Guinea-Bissau is a rich country endowed with fertile lands and abundant rain. What is needed is our support in order to create an enabling environment for investment, to diversify and add value to the country's products, to create employment opportunities and to generate wealth. In the end, it is the creation of fiscal revenues that will enable the Government to operate autonomously in ensuring stability and delivering basic services to the population. Overcoming the infrastructure bottleneck — in particular, the current energy crisis — is of pivotal importance for the revitalization of the economy. In that regard, we welcome the ongoing dialogue with the World Bank and look forward to the completion of procedures aimed at providing Guinea-Bissau with additional electricity-generating capacity.

All stakeholders in the country recognize security sector reform as a matter of central importance for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. We were pleased to note the progress made in that area following the active engagement of international partners, in particular the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process has already been launched with the selection of 30 high-ranking military officials, who have been demobilized and who will be trained in the field of agriculture in Brazil, with the support of ECOWAS, with a view to their reintegration into civilian life. That initiative could serve as an example and prompt similar projects aimed at reintegrating members of the military into society, as that aspect is considered essential to the success of security sector reform.

Strengthening of the justice sector, consolidation of the rule of law and the fight against drug trafficking are matters of growing concern on the part of national authorities and the international community. We are convinced, as stated in the Strategic Framework, that the fight against drug trafficking is an issue involving capacity-building and strengthening the country's ability to monitor its borders and to identify, arrest and bring to justice those responsible for criminal acts. It is imperative that national, regional and international actors step up their efforts in that regard. In particular, the immediate disbursement of pledges announced at

the Lisbon Conference last year is essential if we are to make further progress. We look forward to the Ministerial Conference to be held in Praia at the end of October with the objective of enhancing the regional dimension of the fight against drug trafficking.

In the fight against drug trafficking, there are no easy short cuts; reinforcing the capacity of the State is key. Strategies and plans aimed at strengthening State capacity are already in place in Guinea-Bissau; they need funding. The international community needs to demonstrate its seriousness in addressing the issue by providing the necessary support. Guinea-Bissau may still be a fragile State, but it is no longer in a war or a conflict situation, nor is there any evidence that a conflict is about to take place. On the contrary, there is a legitimate Government, which is currently in the process of consolidating its democracy and its institutions and is trying to pave the way towards stability and development. Guinea-Bissau deserves our full respect as a sovereign country whose willingness and resolve to address its own problems with the support of international partners should not be called into question.

Public sector reform is another priority considered in the Strategic Framework — one that has an impact on virtually all other areas. Important initiatives are under way, such as the launching of an integrated and transparent system of public finance management that will allow for greater centralization and transparency of data related to the Treasury, customs and revenue collection. The country's performance under the emergency post-conflict assistance programme of the International Monetary Fund has paved the way for the commencement of discussions on a regular programme. That in turn will, we hope, lead the country to reach the completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative earlier than expected.

Last but not least, social issues critical to peacebuilding also deserve our unwavering attention. The recent cholera epidemic, which has affected more than 7,000 people and has taken a heavy toll in terms of mortality, is a sad reminder of the plight of a population that remains trapped in a vicious circle of poverty and instability. Poor health and education conditions are associated with the lack of potable water and of reliable energy sources in Guinea-Bissau. I hope that the Strategic Framework will contribute to addressing that situation by calling attention to the predicament of the citizens of Guinea-Bissau and by galvanizing international partners to take action to reverse the situation. Where such adverse living conditions prevail, peace cannot take hold.

The Strategic Framework is a flexible document that will be adapted to circumstances on the ground as they change. It is to be complemented by a monitoring and tracking mechanism, which will comprise a matrix of indicators and benchmarks enabling us to monitor progress in its implementation. The first semi-annual review of the Framework will take place in early 2009. The new Government, which will take office after the legislative elections, will have an opportunity to consider the document and to propose adjustments if necessary.

Therefore, the adoption of the Strategic Framework does not signal the end of our engagement with Guinea-Bissau; on the contrary, it marks the beginning of another important stage of our work. Now we must ensure that concrete measures will be implemented in order to provide the citizens of Guinea-Bissau with the much-awaited peace dividend.

In order to achieve concrete results, however, we will seek to continue playing our role of marshalling additional resources and promoting enhanced coordination among various partners in Guinea-Bissau. A new allocation of the Peacebuilding Fund could be announced to finance projects having catalytic impact and short-term benefits for the population. In that regard, it will be necessary to strengthen the presence of the implementing agencies on the ground so that the Government of Guinea-Bissau can be assisted in an effective and meaningful manner in formulating and executing such projects. In particular, a more coherent and integrated United Nations presence will be crucial in order to provide the Government with the support it needs to overcome its many obstacles and effectively address peacebuilding challenges.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Government of Guinea-Bissau, as well as other stakeholders in the country that have actively contributed to the finalization of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding. I am particularly grateful to the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations country team in Guinea-Bissau for their invaluable support during all stages of this process. My appreciation goes also to the colleagues in the Peacebuilding Support Office for their

continuous and unrelenting assistance. Finally, a work of thanks goes to the delegations of the country-specific configuration on Guinea-Bissau for their active and constructive engagement.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mrs. Viotti for her briefing.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me congratulate you once again, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. For reasons that I need not enumerate here, we are sure that your presidency will have an important impact on our work this month.

I would also like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chairperson of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their informative briefings.

Today's Security Council review of the situation in Guinea-Bissau is taking place at an important stage in the political evolution of a country that is facing numerous challenges. Indeed, since the last report, notable progress has been made in many areas, but not enough to allow us to forget entirely that Guinea-Bissau is still the major convalescent of West Africa. It is still facing the same old evils of political instability and the drug trade, the two main sources that allow insecurity to flourish. Long-term political instability — particularly since the simmering crisis between the army and the central Government, against the backdrop of the threat of an army coup — was further complicated by the withdrawal of the Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde from the governmental coalition.

It will be impossible to rebuild the country if it does not enjoy sound national reconciliation as a factor of unity, stability and progress. The Security Council must therefore call on all political actors to share responsibility and to commit resolutely and jointly to advancing the political process. To that end, it is essential that the new Prime Minister of the caretaker Government, Mr. Carlos Correia, be able to seamlessly carry out the commitments made with regard to convening parliamentary elections in November 2008. Those elections will be the decisive test of whether democracy and good governance has taken root in Guinea-Bissau. In that regard, my delegation pays tribute to the support and involvement of the international community in assisting Guinea-Bissau to move towards credible and transparent elections.

As I pointed out, one way of ensuring the success of the elections and the reconstruction of the country is to improve the security situation, which unfortunately remains precarious given the surge in the drug trade and organized crime. For that reason, we look forward to the holding, on 28 and 29 October, in Praia, Cape Verde, of the Economic Community of West African States Ministerial Conference on Drug Trafficking as it Affects West Africa. Whatever the outcome of that conference, however, the international community must continue to give the necessary support to national authorities in the struggle against that phenomenon, particularly in the framework of the anti-drug operation plan.

At the same time, the Guinea-Bissau Government must pursue the comprehensive implementation of security sector reform according to the guidelines set out in the security sector reform document. In support of that effort, it is vital that a broad information and awareness-building campaign be launched among military personnel and administrative and political officials.

I have described all the serious obstacles to national reconstruction efforts in Guinea-Bissau. First and foremost, however, the only definitive solution to those difficulties is the economic reconstruction of the country. We cannot hide from the fact that in Guinea-Bissau, as in any country emerging from conflict, the only major challenge upon which all else depends is economic development. In that context, the Security Council should welcome the efforts of the Government of Guinea-Bissau towards macroeconomic recovery and urge it to pursue its reforms by strengthening economic management and improving financial transparency and responsibility. Furthermore, the financial partners must continue to support the national authorities in their efforts to alleviate the food crisis and to meet basic social needs, such as education and health.

I cannot close without paying tribute to the work of the Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau and the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission including the implementation of four short-term projects for youth employment, electoral support and the rehabilitation of prisons and military barracks; and the adoption on

1 October of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. It is vital that all players meet their commitments, and particularly that a mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of the recommendations be established in that regard. It is important, too, in this critical phase that there be improved cooperation between the international partners in giving substantial support to the Government's efforts. With regard to the establishment of a panel of exports for Guinea-Bissau, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report, we call for caution and prudence. Above all, we consider that we need to delve deeper into that issue.

The stabilization of the situation in Guinea-Bissau is vital for the West African subregion. For that reason, the Security Council and the international community as a whole must remain mobilized to ensure that peace is consolidated permanently in Guinea-Bissau. To that end, my delegation has drafted a presidential statement that is still being negotiated. We hope that the Security Council will be able to make a decision on that draft statement as soon as possible.

Ms. DiCarlo (United States of America): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and to thank Ambassador Kafando and the delegation of Burkina Faso for the skill with which they conducted the September presidency. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe and Ambassador Viotti for their briefings today.

The United States is pleased to note that legislative elections remain on track for 16 November. We thank the African Union, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations and others for providing election observers. We hope that the elections will be transparent and that any disagreements will be handled only by judicial and constitutional means.

We welcome the arrangements to establish a national peacebuilding fund secretariat office for Guinea-Bissau. We hope that implementing partners will expedite the implementation of the peacebuilding funds for short-term target projects, electoral support, youth employment and the rehabilitation of prisons and military barracks.

The United States is, however, growing increasingly concerned that the steps towards Guinea-Bissau's democratic development may prove unsustainable as the spectre of narcotrafficking threatens to overwhelm the country. Guinea-Bissau is emerging as a major marketplace in the drug trade, as well as continuing to be a hub for the transshipment of drugs.

We are deeply concerned by the events surrounding the 12 July arrival of a plane from Venezuela at Bissau Airport, described in the Secretary-General's report. We understand that the plane arrived without landing rights or the prior knowledge of airport officials. We are very disappointed that military personnel unloaded the plane and took custody of the cargo, which remains unaccounted for, and that a domestic court ordered the release of crew members despite an outstanding international arrest warrant against one of them, notwithstanding protests by the Minister of Justice and the Prosecutor General. We call upon the Government to Guinea-Bissau to give a full accounting of the actions of all officials involved in that episode.

We applaud the proposed regional conference on combating drug trafficking led by ECOWAS and we support greater international attention to that issue, but this is not the whole answer. The Government of Guinea-Bissau needs, in our view, to take a strong leadership position in combating drug trafficking in the country.

Last year at this time, the Security Council expressed its concern with the fragility of the democratization process in Guinea-Bissau, as well as persistent economic and social crisis. While some progress has been made towards growth and sustainable development, we continue to worry that the impact of narcotrafficking and the tensions between political parties will stall Guinea-Bissau's hard-won progress.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and to assure you of the full support of my delegation. I would also like to repeat our appreciation for the work of Ambassador Kafando and his team in the month of September.

We would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Pascoe, and the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Mrs. Maria Luiza

Ribeiro Viotti, for their briefings. We also welcome the presence here of the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau, Ambassador Cabral.

Last week, the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission formally adopted the Strategic Framework. We would like to congratulate the authorities of Guinea-Bissau on reaching this important stage. I would also like to pay tribute to the efforts by our Brazilian colleague and her team. Their involvement led to this outcome.

However, we are all aware that the adoption of the Framework is only a first step. It is now up to everybody to implement the mutual commitments. In this context, it is essential to have tangible indicators, and we therefore commend the intention of the Chair to complete, over the coming weeks, a monitoring and review mechanism for the Strategic Framework.

For its part, the European Union (EU) will continue its support for the priorities identified by the country, particularly security sector reform. The EU support mission is now fully deployed and operational.

One of the first opportunities to implement the Strategic Framework will be the preparation and holding of parliamentary elections next 16 November. The events of this summer showed how fragile the stabilization process was. To deal with that, it is important that the Government's actions be supported by a parliament.

We commend the new Prime Minister's determination to respect the electoral timetable, and we also welcome the mobilization of the people during the electoral registration phase. For his part, President Vieira made a commitment before the General Assembly to ensure that the elections are transparent, free and credible. The EU will take part, including by sending some 50 observers who will join those from the region.

My delegation remains particularly concerned by the rapid growth in criminal networks, particularly drug traffickers, and its consequences for the country and the region. We have taken note of the message from the authorities to your representative indicating their wish that the Security Council would undertake a concrete and robust response in regard to the scale that this phenomenon has assumed and the danger it represents for the country. We can assure them that we share their concern. We express our readiness to discuss all proposals that take into account respect for Guinea-Bissau ownership. All efforts must go towards ensuring that those who are responsible are brought to justice. In this context, all solutions must respect and enhance justice in the country.

The effect of drug trafficking on the institutions in the country and the region has been quite rightly compared to a cancer. It is therefore correct to deal with it at the subregional level. Belgium welcomes the organization by Economic Community of West African States on 28 and 29 October at Praia of a conference to develop a regional action plan. Given the scale of the problem, we are pleased to learn that the United Nations Office for West Africa will be involved in those efforts.

The renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau will come before us in a few weeks' time. Following the elections of 16 November, the Security Council should receive proposals on restructuring that mission. On that occasion it would be useful to study various ways to make best use of United Nations support to the institutions in Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing, which was indeed, as always, a very useful and thought-provoking statement. I would also like to highlight our appreciation for the briefing by Ambassador Viotti.

The Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission has truly been doing remarkable work, not only for the country, but in a wider sense for the Commission itself, strengthening its relevance and credibility as a critical body in the United Nations peace and security architecture. We have to recognize that potential, epitomized by the record participation in the voter registration exercise in Guinea-Bissau and by the continuing progress of grassroots dialogue, showing the strength and vitality of that country's civil society. Equally commendable has been the determination of the country's leadership to hold legitimate elections as scheduled.

It will be important for donors to remain flexible in order to allow for coverage of the remaining sovereignty costs of the elections. We should also react to the challenges reflected by the Secretary-General's emphasis on the expansion of drug trafficking against the backdrop of worsening political and economic

malaise. Reports of mounting pressures on the country's institutions and of alleged collusion with organized crime are particularly disturbing.

Twelve months after we first addressed the new challenges confronting Guinea-Bissau, in presidential statement S/PRST/2007/38 of last October, not only has drug trafficking not been curtailed, but, as indicated in the report before us, it has reached volumes much greater than previously assumed. The Secretary-General has expressed himself very clearly: confronted with a phenomenon that is already affecting peace and security, this Council should take strong action and, to that end, consider establishing an expert panel to investigate the identities and activities of those involved.

That proposal would need to be further detailed, including from the perspective of its likely impact on the ground. In our reading, such an initiative should not necessarily be seen as opening the way to coercive measures, but rather as a way to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon with a view to assisting the investigative and judicial action of national authorities, whose ownership and sovereignty we should aim to preserve and enhance. If so construed, the initiative may send a useful signal, first and foremost to narcotraffickers, that Security Council interest will not remain only on paper. However, it has to be clear that the creation of a new structure, whatever its scope, will not in any way be a substitute for what is really needed on the ground.

Operation Bissalanca, as described in the report, showed once more that only by strengthening Guinea-Bissau's rule of law institutions and regional and international cooperation among interested police and judicial systems will we be able to curtail the expansion of drug trafficking. That is why the action of the Peacebuilding Commission remains crucial, and its full involvement and interaction with the Security Council in any initiative that the Council considers should indeed be a priority. The upcoming regional conference in Cape Verde will be crucial to the success of the fight against narcotics.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his introduction of the report (S/2008/628) of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and on the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS). We listened closely to the assessment of the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Mrs. Viotti, on the work of the Peacebuilding Commission's Guinea-Bissau configuration.

We welcome the establishment of a new Government in the country headed by Carlos Correia. We hope that he will be successful in stabilizing the political and security situation in advance of the parliamentary elections scheduled for 16 November. The holding of open, inclusive and free elections is a significant step towards consolidating peace in Guinea-Bissau. We support the Government's efforts to prepare for the elections and its readiness to respect the timetable for their holding.

We are concerned by the assessment of the Secretary-General, presented by Mr. Pascoe, that Guinea-Bissau is not just a transit point, but one of the centres for drug trafficking. In that regard, we would like to know about the progress of the plan of operation to combat illicit drugs developed by the Government with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We would also like to know more about the work of the Office's representative in Guinea-Bissau. We would also be grateful to the Secretariat for explanations with regard to the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a so-called panel of experts of the Security Council to identify those involved in illegal drug trafficking and organized crime. In particular, what would the mandate of the panel be? What mechanisms would be established for punitive measures? What would the modalities for such a proposal be? We believe that all this requires more clarification, at the very least.

We suggest that, given the limited progress made in that area by the Government, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Peacebuilding Commission, introducing a sanctions regime would not be effective at this stage. If genuine progress is to be made in countering organized crime and the illegal drug trade in Guinea-Bissau, we believe that it is necessary first and foremost to support the country's law enforcement and judicial institutional capacity. We should also fully support the potential of regional organizations in that area, in particular that of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). We welcome the organization of the ECOWAS regional conference on the issue to be held in Cape Verde on 28 and 29 October. We commend the

work done in that area by the Peacebuilding Commission and Mrs. Viotti.

We also welcome the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. We believe it is important to develop a realistic mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Framework.

We are concerned about the slow progress in implementing projects funded by the Peacebuilding Fund. We hope that the Government and its partners will be able to address the current difficulties in implementing those projects. At the same time, experience has shown that there is a need for both project viability and scrutiny of existing capacities when decisions are taken by the Peacebuilding Fund to support a project.

UNOGBIS has an important role to play in supporting political stability in Guinea-Bissau and establishing dialogue between the Government and the Peacebuilding Commission. We look forward to specific recommendations from the Secretary-General to strengthen the potential of UNOGBIS.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Let me first of all join previous speakers in thanking Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe for his briefing, as well as, of course, the Permanent Representative of Brazil Ambassador Viotti, as the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for her statement.

As stated in the report (S/2008/628) of the Secretary-General, and having been identified as one of the peacebuilding challenges, the upcoming legislative elections scheduled for 16 November 2008 are indeed an important landmark in the effort to achieve sustainable peace in the country.

At this important juncture, it is important that the international community continue its sustained assistance to Guinea-Bissau. Continued support in the areas of development and security could contribute greatly to the efforts of Guinea-Bissau to consolidate peace and stability in the country and the subregion.

With regard to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, Indonesia welcomes and supports the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau on 1 October 2008, which was the result of an extensive consultative process involving all the relevant stakeholders. Most important of all, the Framewo k observes a nationally owned process.

We share a common concern with the Secretary-General regarding drug trafficking. Guinea-Bissau is increasingly not merely a transit hub but rather a major marketplace for the drug trade. In order to address that grave problem, we are of the view that the country should build on the December 2007 Lisbon International Conference on Drug Trafficking in Guinea-Bissau. It should bring to bear the efforts of all stakeholders, which came together successfully in "Operation Bissalanca" this past July. My delegation also welcomes the convening of a regional conference by the Economic Community of West African States on combating drug trafficking, which is to be held later this month in Cape Verde. Close cooperation among neighbouring countries of the subregion has the potential to deal with the menace posed by drug trafficking, which is a borderless and transnational form of organized crime.

Drug trafficking and organized crime should be recognized as unintended products of the continuing challenges in institutional and economic development and of the lack of governing capacity, which needs to be addressed. Like in similar cases in many other parts of the world, we believe that what is needed for Guinea-Bissau is also a concerted effort to build the national capacities needed to overcome drug trafficking and organized crime. In that regard, we need to respond positively to the appeal of national authorities for international support to combat drug trafficking. The international community is therefore called on to lend its full support to the efforts of the Government of Guinea-Bissau in strengthening its legal, law enforcement and judicial institutions to deal with those criminal acts.

Strengthened law enforcement and judicial institutions will accordingly be in a sound position to identify those who are involved in those activities and to bring them to justice in accordance with the country's national laws and regulations. It is through that emphasis on the building of national capacity that we view the efficacy of punitive sanctions and the possible establishment of a panel of experts by the Security Council.

We are of the view that the Security Council could continue to play its role by encouraging a more coherent and holistic approach by international stakeholders, and in particular by the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS), in order to contribute to the

establishment of peace, stability and prosperity in Guinea-Bissau. The placement of Guinea-Bissau on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission makes it clear that the country has graduated from conflict to the post-conflict phase, in which internal consolidation and national capacity building are key.

Lastly, let me reiterate Indonesia's continued support for UNOGBIS in helping to consolidate peace, democracy and the rule of law in Guinea-Bissau. My delegation would also like to commend the crucial role being played by the Peacebuilding Commission, in particular by its Guinea-Bissau configuration.

Mr. Skračić (Croatia): As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor this month, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency for the month of October. We also extend our appreciation to Ambassador Kafando and his delegation for their excellent work in the previous month. We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his detailed report, as well as Ambassador Maria Ribeiro Viotti of Brazil, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Guinea-Bissau configuration, for her detailed briefing.

Croatia is encouraged by the hard work Guinea-Bissau and its international partners have carried out thus far in their efforts to reconstruct the country and to re-establish a lasting peace, and we hope that this process will continue to move in the right direction. It is for that reason that we are concerned about the deepening political crisis and the further development of military tensions that have been growing in the past few months in Guinea-Bissau, especially in view of the quickly approaching elections.

In that context, Croatia welcomes the stabilization of the situation following the appointment of the new caretaker Government. We welcome the determination expressed by the new Government to continue the necessary reforms, especially in the areas of security, the public sector and drug trafficking.

Croatia welcomes the steady preparations for the elections, and we commend the Government on successful voter registration, which has recorded 94.6 per cent participation. It is particularly important that the results of the registration are accepted by all main electoral institutions. Moreover, it is encouraging to see a narrowing of the electoral financial gap thanks to generous donations and the Government's efforts.

Assurances from the highest positions, including the clearly expressed intention of the new Government that legislative elections will be held as scheduled on 16 November 2008, are also of the highest importance. The elections should take place in a stable and secure environment, with the open and unhindered participation of professional and credible media and other forms of international verification. Croatia welcomes the recent visit of a European electoral observer mission to Guinea-Bissau and its recommendation to deploy an estimated 50 European Union electoral observers, as well as the recent visit to the country by the African Union assessment mission.

Croatia especially commends the role of the United Nations system in assisting the Government of Guinea-Bissau with the upcoming elections and the coordinating role of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau regarding international observers who will not operate under a European Union umbrella.

We would like to commend the considerable efforts made in cooperation between the Government and the international community in promoting security sector reform and concrete actions in that regard. One such action, which we welcome, is the deployment of a team of 15 European Union civilian and military personnel under the European Security and Defence Policy programme, with the aim of promoting a better understanding of the four-pillar programme on justice, security, defence and veterans affairs.

Croatia is extremely concerned by reports of drug trafficking and organized crime spreading throughout Guinea-Bissau. It is obvious that the increasing incidence of drug trafficking threatens peace and security in Guinea-Bissau and in the subregion. We strongly support decisive action against drug traffickers, and in that regard, as a step in the right direction, we welcome the concrete efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to strengthen the judicial police involved in counter-narcotics activities. We also welcome the convening by the Economic Community of West African States of a regional conference on combating drug trafficking and the resulting regional plan of action to effectively deal with the menace posed by drug trafficking to the countries of West Africa.

In particular, Croatia welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation to establish a panel of experts in order to investigate the identity and

activities of those involved in drug trafficking and organized crime. That recommendation deserves, in our opinion, further consideration. Croatia welcomes the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau by the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on 1 October 2008, and the ongoing implementation of the four quick-impact projects for electoral support, youth employment, the rehabilitation of prisons and military barracks.

On a final note, my delegation would like to thank the delegation of Burkina Faso for preparing the draft presidential statement on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, on which it has our full support.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Mr. Pascoe and Ambassador Viotti of Brazil for their briefings.

As the Secretary-General has stressed in his report (S/2008/628), the political situation in Guinea-Bissau is still fragile, and it is important that the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau work to facilitate a good political climate, in particular in view of the elections. In that regard, special attention should be given to the role of the media. The legislative elections that should be held on 16 November are doubtless a very critical stage. It is important that those elections be held on that date in a transparent and democratic manner. It is also important for the Council to follow the process very closely and take a stand on this question when the time comes.

Guinea-Bissau still has many challenges to meet. The main one is the fight against drug trafficking. We need to stress the regional element in that struggle. In that regard, France welcomes the organization, by the Economic Community of West African States of a regional conference on that issue to be held at the end of the month in Praia. Many recent events have shown the clear need to strengthen Guinea-Bissau's operational capacity in combating that scourge. We would like to receive further information from the Secretariat on the proposed panel of experts and the role that it would play in strengthening institutional capacity for the relevant entities in Guinea-Bissau.

Security sector reform is the second challenge, and the European Union actively supports the Government through its advisory mission, which is now fully operational, and the European Commission programmes in the various reform areas, in particular justice sector reform. We would ask the Government of Guinea-Bissau to hold the course.

The third challenge relates to socio-economic recovery. The recent cholera epidemic shows the great difficulties facing the country, and in that respect we welcome the progress highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report with regard to relations with multilateral donors.

To conclude, my delegation is pleased at the now-regular dialogue with the Peacebuilding Commission. France welcomes in that regard the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau and would invite the Commission to keep the Council informed of progress achieved in its implementation.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): My delegation too wishes to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/628). We also thank the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, for briefing the Council on recent developments as they relate to the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) and of the country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

South Africa is pleased that, despite the recent political developments in Guinea-Bissau — that is, the tension among the members of the Political and Government Stability Pact and within the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), reports of an attempted coup d'état, the dissolution of parliament and the setting up of a new caretaker Government — all those things have not upset the political situation in Guinea-Bissau, which in fact did not erupt into any political violence. That continuity, we believe, is a positive sign of trust in the institutions of governance and the consolidation of democracy, which bodes well for the legislative elections scheduled for 16 November 2008.

The voter registration figure of 94 per cent is in itself a remarkable achievement and speaks to the confidence of the people of Guinea-Bissau in the electoral and political processes in that country. I should add here that Guinea-Bissau has always had free and fair elections in the past.

For that reason, my delegation is very pleased by the report that the funding gap for the elections has

been reduced significantly, and we thank the multilateral and bilateral donors for responding positively to the request by the Secretary-General and the Government for financial support for elections in Guinea-Bissau.

My delegation is also pleased and encouraged by the report's descriptions of ongoing security sector reform, and we hold the view that addressing security sector reform in Guinea-Bissau is very important and will further enhance and consolidate peace and stability in that country.

My delegation is also deeply concerned about the continued reports of drug trafficking and organized crime in Guinea-Bissau, and shares the assessment of the Secretary- General that those illegal activities can cast an

> "increasingly dark shadow over the country and threatens not only to erase the important progress in the area of governance, but also to undermine ongoing efforts for longer-term peacebuilding" (*S/2008/628, para. 45*).

However, having said that, we do not believe that the suggestion to create an expert group is the answer to the illegal drug trafficking that is affecting Guinea-Bissau. In fact, I should like once again to quote the reason given, very diplomatically, by Ambassador Viotti in her statement today. Her response to that issue was that

> "Guinea-Bissau may still be a fragile State, but it is no longer in a war or a conflict situation, nor is there any evidence that a conflict is about to take place. On the contrary, there is a legitimate Government, which is currently in the process of consolidating its democracy and its institutions and is trying to pave the way towards stability and development. Guinea-Bissau deserves our full respect as a sovereign country whose willingness and resolve to address its own problems with the support of international partners should not be called into question."

In other words, what we need is to help strengthen the institutions of law and order in Guinea-Bissau, rather than minimize its sovereignty by creating an expert group at a time when we should be strengthening its Government. In fact, if we refer to the Secretary-General's report, paragraphs 21 to 23 point out that what we really need in Guinea-Bissau is a much stronger Government in terms of law and order, rather than an expert group. I do not know how one can deal with any of the problems that are mentioned in those paragraphs, including planes landing and people being given bail and then disappearing. I do not know how an expert group would deal with that.

What we need is to strengthen the institutions of Guinea-Bissau so that they themselves can deal with that issue. I would join in the call of the United States representative for the Government of Guinea-Bissau to account for and provide leadership on what has happened with respect to those issues, rather than subject a country that is still very fragile to an expert group, which we do not believe would really do anything more than divert the country's efforts to strengthen its own institutions of law and order. The support of the international community in building and strengthening the capacity of local law enforcement and judicial authorities in dealing with that challenge will remain critical.

A further challenge to the Government of Guinea-Bissau are the rising fuel and food prices that forced the Government to adopt such drastic fiscal measures as reducing tariffs. That led to a reduction in revenue, resulting in salary arrears in July and August 2008. Again, it is worth recalling that salaries used to be in arrears for many months. The current Government has tried to close that gap, and today we can sit here and talk about salaries being in arrears for just the two months of July and August. That is yet another reason why we need to strengthen the Government so that it can deal with the fundamental issues in Guinea-Bissau. The issue of salary arrears presents a serious challenge indeed for political stability, and the budgetary support received from the World Bank, the West African Monetary Union and the Central Bank of West African States needs to be commended.

My delegation wishes again to pay tribute to the Guinea-Bissau country-specific meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission, chaired by Ambassador Viotti, for the speedy and comprehensive manner in which the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding was negotiated and adopted. That is important in view of the many but interrelated challenges facing Guinea-Bissau. The work of the Commission, the Peacebuilding Fund and the international community in addressing governance, security and economic challenges will, in our view, begin to lay the

foundations for sustainable peace and prosperity in Guinea-Bissau.

South Africa will continue to work with its partners India and Brazil in assisting Guinea-Bissau in the area of agriculture through the India, Brazil and South Africa Trust Fund. South Africa, in addition to opening its embassy in Bissau in March 2008, also signed a framework cooperation agreement with Guinea-Bissau on 25 September 2008 that will lay the basis for bilateral cooperation between the two countries in a variety of areas, including agriculture, defence, trade, industry and mining, among others.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes again to thank the staff of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, as well as the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Guinea-Bissau country-specific meeting of the Peacebuilding Commission for their hard work, dedication and commitment to achieving sustainable peace and development in Guinea-Bissau. All the people of Guinea-Bissau need is a hand from the international community to overcome the challenges they face.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to join those who spoke before me in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We wish to assure you of our cooperation and support. We are truly confident that you will ably guide our work.

We also wish to express our appreciation to Ambassador Michel Kafando and his delegation for their wise and effective leadership of the Council last month.

We thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti of Brazil, Chairperson of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. We also welcome Ambassador Cabral to this meeting.

In commending the efforts and achievements of the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the international community, we are compelled to acknowledge that the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/628) highlights many causes for concern. The deepening political crisis; the spectres of military tension and pressure; the coup attempt; the withdrawal from the Government of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde; the spread of organized crime, especially drug trafficking; the rampant impunity that forces people to take the law into their own hands; the modest annual economic growth rate of 3 per cent; increasing prices, especially for staples such as rice; and the ongoing cholera epidemic: all of these are mentioned in the report and in the two briefings we heard this morning, and they are cause for grave concern.

Reason for hope, however, is seen in positive developments and achievements with respect to the role of the Peacebuilding Commission and the endeavours of the Government and the United Nations system to formulate an integrated framework for peacebuilding. In her briefing, Mrs. Viotti spoke of the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau and of the improved environment for the holding of elections, for voter registration and for the filling of the funding gap. All parties have shown their commitment to that end.

Among the issues that require immediate attention is drug trafficking, which endangers peace, security and reconstruction in Guinea-Bissau, in the subregion and throughout the continent. Regrettably, owing to the difficulties faced by national and international anti-trafficking institutions, the country has become a transit hub. The report of the Secretary-General makes this clear in referring to Operation Bissalanca, and it was underscored by what the Minister of Justice told the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau: that there is involvement at the national level. We therefore consider it important to support the Secretary-General's recommendation that a group of experts be established to investigate the problem — in cooperation with the local authorities, of course — and the activities, role and identity of those involved in drug trafficking and other transnational crime, with a view to taking the necessary punitive measures against them.

We are gratified by the major role that the Peacebuilding Commission is playing in Guinea-Bissau, by the forthcoming establishment of a national peacebuilding fund secretariat office for Guinea-Bissau and by the four quick-impact projects approved by the Commission, which are now under way. Here, we commend the relevant United Nations agencies and other partners and express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti for her efforts.

In conclusion, I reaffirm my delegation's deep appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations, the donor community, the European Union, the Economic Community of West African States, Brazil and other partners. At the same time, we are of the view that they should give priority to security sector and judicial reform and to combating hunger and poverty.

Permit me to make a comment. The elections mean a great deal to those who day after day suffer hunger and who live in an environment marked by a lack of respect and a lack of security, and I am not minimizing the significance of the elections: I believe they are indeed important. At the same time, I believe that where there is hunger and a lack of safety and security, the best option is to give priority to fighting hunger and providing security.

We thank the delegation of Burkina Faso for its initiative in drafting a presidential statement, which we fully endorse.

Mr. Ballestero (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me start, Sir, by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency and by reaffirming our full support. Also, I take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Kafando and his team for their successful presidency during the complicated month of September. My thanks go also to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings and for all their endeavours to improve compliance with the mandates relating to Guinea-Bissau.

Moreover, I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this debate in a format that enables all Members of the Organization to benefit from the briefings and to consider all the statements to be made by Council members and by the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau, to whose statement we shall listen carefully after Council members have spoken, and not before, as we thought had been adopted as our normal practice. My delegation had understood that this discussion had been completed and that, as a general rule, Council members would first hear the representative of the country concerned before making their own statements. It appears that this matter will need to be taken up again in consultations.

In our view, the convening of today's debate is a direct result of a broad call, made just a few weeks ago, for the Council to apply, judiciously and rigorously, the standard that public meetings should be the rule, not the exception. I take this opportunity, Sir, to pay tribute to your presidency for the openness you have displayed in this regard and to the other members of the Council for their flexibility.

Our debate should give us an opportunity to recognize the efforts of the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the Peacebuilding Commission in adopting the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. In our view, that is a step in the right direction. Only a process reflecting national priorities, based on internal dialogue and strengthened by the cooperation of all stakeholders — certainly including the international community — can help to overcome the enormous challenges facing the people of Guinea-Bissau. We agree with and support the assessment made by Ambassador Viotti that this is not the end of the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement, but rather the beginning of another, very important stage.

My country is concerned to note that the situation on the ground remains extremely fragile. If there is a place where the linkage between the pillars of security, development and human rights is absolutely indisputable, it is Guinea-Bissau. The Council should continue to seek the necessary political support so that, in close coordination with the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS), can fulfil its mandate in a creative, coordinated and effective manner.

We have followed very carefully the political events of the last few months, and we are concerned at the deterioration we see in relations among the different parties, which reached the point that the Government party decided to withdraw from the political and government stability pact that was signed last year. The results came quickly.

On the other hand, the intent to stage a coup that the authorities discovered in August, apparently led by the Chief of Staff of the Navy, shows the fragility of the institutional progress achieved and demonstrates the magnitude of the challenges that must be overcome in implementing a broad security sector reform. Costa Rica would suggest making a priority of that component of the peacebuilding plan, so that the rule of law can be strengthened, the bases for institutional

development can be established, and legal economic activities can be facilitated.

A State that, like Guinea-Bissau, is fighting to consolidate itself finds its best ally in a system of institutions that is stable and worthy of trust by its users. Therefore it is essential to attack corruption at its roots and take the needed measures to strengthen the fight against organized crime. In that context, regional efforts developed recently should have the full support of the entire international community.

Costa Rica reiterates its support for the regional conference on drug trafficking and organized crime being organized by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Praia, Cape Verde at the end of the month. We await the results with interest. The threat of organized crime while institutional development is only emerging can be attacked successfully only through a coordinated fashion among all the States affected. The regional approach must be robust and effective, as Under-Secretary-General Pascoe has said.

This Council, UNOGBIS and the Peacebuilding Commission should act together to ensure results in the short term that can be sustained over the long term. For that reason, Costa Rica views with interest the Secretary-General's recommendation on creating a panel of experts to investigate the identity and activities of those involved in the drug business and drug trafficking. However, we consider — and we must stress this — that we need more details with regard to the implications, the concrete objectives and the scope of the proposal, including the links that, it is hoped, that panel of experts would have with the other institutional efforts deployed in Guinea-Bissau, especially with the sovereign Government of the country. In that sense, we endorse the words of the Permanent Representative of South Africa.

Although the elements of security and justice are basic for peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau, the catalyst for change doubtless is democratic legitimacy. Costa Rica believes that the electoral process of next November is essential in peacebuilding. The very high number of voters who registered in the process — 94.6 per cent — is an encouraging sign that shows the importance of those legislative elections for the people themselves. Therefore we call on the Government and other political actors to participate in a frank and permanent dialogue that will strengthen achievements and allow for an electoral process that is transparent, peaceful and inclusive.

This Council needs to send a clear message to the people and Government of Guinea-Bissau, one that will tell all the actors involved in the future of that country that the Security Council is following the situation closely and, more importantly, will do everything possible for it to take the path of development, good governance and the rule of law. Thus Costa Rica wishes to thank the delegation of Burkina Faso for presenting a draft presidential statement, which we are studying in detail and expect to endorse.

Mr. Huang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): My delegation too wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We also congratulate Ambassador Kafando of Burkina Faso and his team for their excellent work during their presidency of the Council last month.

We wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing. We commend the efforts of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and the United Nations country team under challenging circumstances. We also thank Ambassador Viotti of Brazil, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for her statement.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that preparations for the legislative elections scheduled for 16 November 2008 in Guinea-Bissau have been on track and that the voter registration exercise has been successful. We welcome the ongoing engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, exemplified by the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in the country and the ongoing implementation of the emergency post-conflict assistance programme with the International Monetary Fund. All that demonstrates the continued commitment of the international community to support Guinea-Bissau's peacebuilding efforts.

However, we are deeply concerned about the volatile security and political situation and the general deterioration of living conditions in Guinea-Bissau, especially against the backdrop of upcoming elections and rising food and fuel prices. While recognizing the vital importance of poverty reduction, fiscal management, food security, health care and education promotion, disarmament and humanitarian assistance, we share the Secretary-General's appeal for enhanced

support and training for Guinea-Bissau's law enforcement and criminal justice system within the wider framework of security sector reform and the fight against organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism. We call on all national stakeholders to exercise restraint, renounce violence and strengthen political dialogue and reconciliation, thus contributing to the steady consolidation of peace and creating an environment conducive to socio-economic reconstruction and ensuring the peaceful and timely organization of the polls.

While reaffirming that peace, reconciliation and stability in Guinea-Bissau are critical for peace and security in the West African subregion, we recognize the role being played by the Peacebuilding Commission, the United Nations agencies, regional organizations and the international community in facilitating the peacebuilding process in Guinea-Bissau. It is our expectation that the Government of that country will effectively galvanize bilateral and multilateral assistance and achieve further concrete progress in the course of achieving durable peace and sustainable development.

Finally, we thank the delegation of Burkina Faso for the draft presidential statement, which we are prepared to support. We hope the Council will be able to adopt it promptly.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency. Of course you can count on our support throughout the month. We would also like to thank Ambassador Kafando and all the delegation of Burkina Faso for all their work last month during their presidency. Above all, we would like to thank Mr. Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Viotti, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration for Guinea-Bissau, for their briefings.

We want to welcome the Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau, Ambassador Cabral. I should confess that my delegation feels somewhat uncomfortable at having to thank Ambassador Cabral for his statement before having heard it. We would have preferred to react to his statement, on an equal footing with the statements from the Under-Secretary-General and the Chair of the country-specific configuration for Guinea-Bissau.

My delegation agrees with the briefers and with members who have already spoken about the need to ensure that the 16 November legislative elections are transparent, fair and peaceful. That will be possible only with the consent of all sectors and interested parties in Guinea-Bissau, and the elections will be an important step — with many more to follow, of course — in showing their commitment to institutionalizing a democratic State where the rule of law prevails.

We have heard many positive statements today with regard to the work of various people in Guinea-Bissau, whom we sincerely congratulate and thank. Nevertheless, there are many factors that if allowed to continue to deteriorate could directly affect those achievements. For example, we have evidence that Guinea-Bissau has gone from being a hub of drug trafficking to being also a major marketplace for drugs, with an accompanying increase in organized crime.

Just as the problems of drug trafficking, smuggling and organized crime have regional components, an unstable Guinea-Bissau would also have consequences for the region. While the nature of many of those issues at first sight is one of policing, their extent and specifics present security challenges at the transnational level as well. More than ever, they require unified, multidimensional and coordinated responses. These will need to include attention to all aspects of institution-building, the building of democracy, social and development issues and issues related to the security and protection of the population. To begin with, we hope that concrete initiatives will be undertaken at the regional meeting to be held in Cape Verde and that careful consideration will be given to the Secretary-General's recommendation to establish a group of experts.

For all those reasons, it is clear that the Security Council still has a role and an important responsibility to fulfil in Guinea-Bissau and must continue actively to concern itself with these issues. The Council, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Government of Guinea-Bissau must continue also to cooperate closely with the Peacebuilding Commission and other actors in the region to ensure that Guinea-Bissau will become an exporter of stability.

Mr. Quarrey (United Kingdom): First of all, we would like to express our congratulations to you, Sir,

and to China on your assumption of the presidency of the Council this month, and also to underline our gratitude to Ambassador Kafando and the team of Burkina Faso for their very successful shepherding of the Council through the busy month of September.

We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing today and Ambassador Viotti for her briefing on the work of the Peacebuilding Commission on Guinea-Bissau. We welcome the adoption of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau. I think it is important that a monitoring and tracking mechanism that sets out realistic and tangible benchmarks for Guinea-Bissau be developed soon.

I would like briefly to touch on three points. First of all, we greatly welcome the progress made in preparing for the elections to be held on 16 November, including the successful voter registration exercise. Clearly, it is critical that those elections go ahead on time and that all, including the military and the political parties, ensure that there is an environment conducive to the elections being held freely and fairly.

Secondly, like others, we are deeply concerned by the reported rise in drug trafficking and, increasingly, drug trading, in Guinea-Bissau and other aspects of organized crime. I think the events following the landing of the plane from Venezuela on 12 July threw those concerns into stark relief. It is clear that there needs to be some further discussion on the Secretary-General's suggestion of a role for a panel of experts to look at these issues, and we would be happy to take part in those discussions.

However, like others, we think that the primary responsibility for action, certainly in the short term, is at the national level, and we look forward to efforts to enhance the cooperation among law-enforcement agencies in Guinea-Bissau and to strengthen their capacities. Secondly, action at the subregional level would be very important too, and we look forward to the outcome of the upcoming Economic Community of West African States meeting.

Thirdly, we remain concerned about the case of Alberto Dabo and continuing reports of intimidation of journalists, magistrates and human rights activists. Those issues surrounding the human rights situation in Guinea-Bissau have implications both for the political process and for the fight against drug trafficking, and we hope that the Government and United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau will be able to act to tackle those concerns.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe and Ambassador Viotti for their briefings on developments in Guinea-Bissau. It has been several years since the question of Guinea-Bissau was put on the agenda of the Council. In recent years, the Government and the people of Guinea-Bissau, with vigorous support from the international community, have made tireless efforts to find ways and means to restore political stability, enhance the peace process and promote economic development. As a result, some progress has been achieved. Last August, a new Government, headed by Prime Minister Correia, was formed. Legislative elections are scheduled to take place in November. Those events show that people want stability in Guinea-Bissau; the political situation can be expected to improve.

China hopes that all parties in Guinea-Bissau will build upon the election to enhance dialogue and further increase common ground with a view to consolidating effectively the process of political reconciliation. The prolonged political instability in Guinea-Bissau is rooted in issues of development. The peacebuilding process cannot be effectively consolidated unless political reconciliation and economic development can be pushed forward in parallel. People want peace, because they want a happy life. They want peace to take root and they want lasting political reconciliation. Economic and social development must be promoted consistently, so that people can feel the benefits that peace brings to their lives.

We are pleased to see that recently the economic situation in Guinea-Bissau has been developing in a good direction. This has resulted from efforts by Guinea-Bissau itself and at the same time is inseparable from the support of the international community. However, Guinea-Bissau has a weak economic foundation and faces many challenges in the field of social development. We call upon the international community to continue its support for Guinea-Bissau in an effort to combat drug trafficking, create employment and improve infrastructure. We expect and believe that with the joint efforts of the Government, all political factions and the people of Guinea-Bissau, and with

earnest support from the international community, the process of peacebuilding in Guinea-Bissau will continue to yield positive progress.

Before concluding, we wish to express our appreciation and thanks to the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau and the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on Guinea-Bissau for their work. We are confident that they will be able to make greater contributions to peacebuilding efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the members of the Security Council on behalf of my country, Guinea-Bissau, especially because the analysis of the situation in Guinea-Bissau contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/628), comes as you assume the presidency of the Council. I express to you the congratulations of my delegation, and I echo the congratulations you expressed at the outset to the Permanent Representative of Burkina Faso on the manner in which he guided the work of the Council last month. I do so with all the more pleasure because he is a representative of an eminent member of the countries of West Africa.

I would like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing introducing the very important report of the Secretary-General.

We, in Guinea-Bissau, are very devoted to peace and stability, as you have just observed, Mr. President. That is especially true because we know that we ourselves bear primary responsibility for addressing the situation in our country and for ensuring that peace and security become a permanent reality in Guinea-Bissau.

We agree with the representative of the United States when she says quite pertinently that Guinea-Bissau needs to show leadership. That is exactly what we would like to do. However, in order to achieve that, we need stable institutions, we need to consolidate our institutions and we need to overcome major obstacles. I am happy that, in his statement, the representative of Croatia described the immense nature of the task before us, which we must accomplish by working together with our partners.

I would like to say that we are aware that we need to persevere and that we need to create the favourable conditions necessary for the holding of free, transparent and credible elections on 16 November. President Vieira of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau has stated that before the General Assembly. We want those elections to be an opportunity for the people of Guinea-Bissau to freely declare their will and make their choice.

We hope, and indeed I am convinced, that when the time comes, the people of Guinea-Bissau will show not only civic spirit but also civility: civil spirit in taking the opportunity to freely choose those men or women who will be called upon to represent the people in the National Assembly; civility in going to the polls in an orderly fashion, thus guaranteeing the transparency of those elections and ensuring that they will be credible and that their results may be accepted by all for the greater good of our people.

I would like to say that, yes, there have been tensions. However, in a country that wishes to learn democracy and that is devoted to the virtues of democracy, in a young country that is facing enormous economic and financial problems, it is almost natural to consider that there will be differences in point of view, and even disputes. If I may say so, differences in point of view are consubstantial with the existence of a genuine democracy.

We hope that what has transpired in Guinea-Bissau can serve as a lesson, because we have been able to overcome those difficulties by turning to democratic institutions — specifically, to the Supreme Court. There was no violence, and that is the result of how strongly democratic principles are anchored in the mentality of my compatriots, something that I believe should be celebrated. We will do everything to ensure that the elections take place. We owe that to the international community in return for the aid that we have received. I think that everything suggests not only that the elections will be held on 16 November, but that they will take place in full transparency.

Some speakers have mentioned the level of participation of the people of Guinea-Bissau in exercising their democratic rights: there has been more than 96 per cent participation, ensuring that voters have their voting cards. Despite the fact that this is the rainy season — and those who are familiar with the

difficulties created by the rainy season in Africa will recognize the importance of what I am saying — that figure of more than 96 per cent not only reflects the level of participation, but demonstrates the importance of the coming elections to the people of Guinea-Bissau.

I would like to say that we share the Council's concerns with regard to the drug trafficking problem. Until five years ago, no one had ever heard of drugs in Guinea-Bissau. No one had ever even heard of marijuana. I myself have never seen a single leaf of marijuana, and I am not the most naïve amongst my compatriots. If we are now facing this situation, it is because we are the weakest link in the chain of the subregion. We do not have the institutions we need.

We are talking about a State that is decaying, and I say that frankly because, as Mr. Pascoe has just noted, we have been honest when we have come to the international community to ask for help. We have not attempted to hide the major drug trafficking problem in Guinea-Bissau, which could ruin all of our efforts in terms of democracy and development and have effects we cannot even measure on the minds of young people and on their present and future behaviour.

As I said, we are the weakest link. We need the assistance of the international community. We need solid institutions. We need a police force that works and courts that are capable of rendering justice. We need to build prisons. We need a functioning, credible, justice system to which both the people of Guinea-Bissau and foreigners can appeal in their search for justice. For that reason, I would like to express my agreement with previous speakers: we must first of all put much more emphasis on institution-building. There can be no democracy without the pillars of that essential structure that is justice.

I do not want to overextend my remarks, but I would like to note and welcome the statement of the representative of Brazil, Mrs. Viotti, in her capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. It is undeniable that significant progress has been made, progress that the members of the Council, the international community and our friends in the Commission have supported. I would like to say that we are indebted to Ambassador Viotti for her personal dedication and for the dynamism she imparted to the work of the Guinea-Bissau configuration. Through her, I would like to thank the other members of the Guinea-Bissau configuration for their speed in adopting the Strategic Framework.

As was so aptly stated by the Ambassador of Indonesia, the Strategic Framework is the result of a collective and participatory effort. I am sure that we have much to learn from this process. For the first time, the Guinea-Bissau configuration includes all stakeholders. The Government, the political parties, young people, women, all civil society — indeed, all who have something to say about the rebuilding of Guinea-Bissau and are duty-bound to do so — have participated. It is truly the result of a collective effort, and I welcome it, because throughout the process I have seen my compatriots, who are not used to discussion, discussing things together.

They spoke to the essentials: how to ensure that we can study the real problems of our country together; how, with the help of the international community, we can find the most appropriate way out of the major crisis in which we find ourselves. The situation is not a fatal one. I would stress that we can find a way out so long as we receive the aid that we need and so long as we can demonstrate resolve and leadership, as was underlined again by the representative of the United States. I hope we can.

I would like to assure the Council that the authorities of Guinea-Bissau will spare no effort to ensure not only that the elections are held, but that they are held in the greatest possible transparency, that they are credible and that the results, whatever they may be, are accepted by all as the free expression of the people's choice.

With regard to the major problem of drug trafficking, I insist that, together, we can meet the challenge, as Mr. Pascoe said early in his briefing. He said that it was an enormous task, a gigantic task. Everyone will have to cooperate to that end. That is why the subregional approach is the best, and we are happy to be meeting in three weeks' time in the capital of Cape Verde, Praia, in order to consider that issue in depth.

It is an issue that involves all of us. I am sure that my compatriots are sad to know that Guinea-Bissau has become a market for drugs. We deserve better. The people of Guinea-Bissau — as you, Mr. President, emphasized — want to build their country, adhere to the principles of democracy, and promote social development, because that is what we need. In her statement, Mrs. Viotti identified the myriad challenges

we face, particularly in the social sphere. My country is now experiencing a cholera epidemic, and I take this opportunity to appeal once again to the international community to assist us in halting an epidemic that has killed dozens of my fellow citizens.

We agree with the Secretary-General that we need to face the challenge together. The Bretton Woods institutions, which are aware of the efforts already made by Guinea-Bissau, can help us in a far more substantial manner. I can assure the Council that, through transparency, rigorous management of State finances, and efforts to clean up our finances — for which we have been congratulated by the Bretton Woods institutions — we are sure to succeed. Guinea-Bissau will be able to meet the challenges posed by democracy and especially by development, as noted by the representative of Burkina Faso in his statement.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe to respond to speakers' questions and comments.

Mr. Pascoe: I am very reluctant to follow the eloquent statement made by the representative of Guinea-Bissau, but let me answer, if I might, one or two questions that were raised in this meeting.

In the first instance, let me say how gratified I am by the very widespread understanding around this Chamber of the importance of bringing together all of the elements — political, security and development elements — to work together. The representative of Costa Rica stated it extraordinarily eloquently, but many others had the same thought.

We are delighted to be working with the Peacebuilding Commission. We find the Commission to be extremely active and energetic and we believe that it adds a great deal to all of the United Nations efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

The question was raised about the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau and what we are doing with it. As the Council knows, it has been very deeply involved in the past in trying to work with the Government, the people and the leaders there on moving the political process forward. It is very deeply involved in helping with things like the elections and with some political issues. It has also been working very hard on and raised some of the first alarms about the drug issue. It has been very effective in having the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and others be involved in this issue.

We are hoping that, in a reorganization of the Office in the next few months, we can also make sure that we tighten the integration of the programmes overall to be most effective. I should say that Mr. Omoregie would be with us to be answering these questions, except that he is recuperating from a medical procedure so he could not be with us today, and I apologize for that, as does he.

The question was also raised by the representative of the Russian Federation about the national anti-drug strategy. Yes, indeed, the Government of Guinea-Bissau does have a good national anti-drug strategy, which was solidly backed at the Lisbon conference last December with pledges by the international community of over $6 million. The effort there, of course, is a very strong one to get control of the drug problems that have been discussed by many of us here today.

The authorities have asked for assistance. They have been looking for additional assistance. Let me join with Ambassador Viotti in her appeal this morning for disbursement of the pledges that were made at the Lisbon conference, because I think that it is very important that we all work together to build the anti-drug capacity. Again, UNODC has been working hard on that matter. It has a permanent representative in Guinea-Bissau who is now working on these issues.

Finally, there were several questions raised about our suggestion on the panel of experts. That suggestion arose from requests from people in the Government for assistance by the international community to provide support for addressing the problems. Clearly, even with the most effective development of the internal fight against the drug problem, there are many international issues and problems there that the Government is having trouble dealing with. We agree completely that the most important long-term thing objective is building up the institutions, but this request is for some additional help along those lines. We are happy to discuss it with the Council in the weeks ahead to see if the idea has merit and if something could usefully be done in that area.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.